

Even in these highly polarized times, inaugural addresses still afford a unique opportunity for the nation's chief executive to reset relations with the American people and reach for common ground.

The grand swearing in ceremony held on the West Front of the U.S. Capitol every four years summons nearly a million people to Washington and millions more to their television sets, offering the incoming president the greatest bully pulpit imaginable to paint his vision for the future. Unfortunately, very few unifying tones were delivered in President Obama's second inaugural address.

I was particularly struck by the news media's characterization of President Obama's speech. While reliably effusive in their praise of the president, even the news outlets normally coziest with Mr. Obama cast his remarks as anything but conciliatory. The Los Angeles Times headlined: "A Sweeping Liberal Vision." The New York Times: "Obama Offers Liberal Vision: 'We Must Act.'"

The president's second inaugural address not only stood out for its unvarnished honesty of his renewed agenda – which one The Washington Post blogger characterized as "The Full Liberal" – but it also got notice for its lack of attention to the country's most pressing problems – the economy and crippling government debt.

In the president's 2,100-word speech there was scant mention – less than 50 words – of Americans struggling to make ends meet or the sustained national unemployment levels of near eight percent more than four years into his presidency.

In contrast, a Pew Research survey released last week captured a difference picture of Americans' concerns. "Strengthening the economy – 86 percent", "Improving job situation – 79 percent" and "Reducing the budget deficit – 72 percent" were ranked as the country's top priorities going into 2013. So what did the president cite in his address as the top goals for his administration's second term? He spoke about climate change, gay marriage and immigration reform. Interestingly, these issues were ranked at the bottom of the Pew public opinion survey.

Sadly, President Obama squandered a rare moment to reach out to a vast number of Americans who profoundly disagree with his policies. He also missed an opportunity to pledge to work with Congress to jointly solve our nation's greatest challenges.

A Gallup poll also released last week found that Mr. Obama's fourth year in office ranks as one of the most politically polarized in history. It is, therefore, disappointing that he chose that critical moment to issue a clarion call for even more division.

### **House Passes "No Budget, No Pay Act"**

Many Americans think of Washington as a kind of Alice in Wonderland place where the laws of nature don't apply. To watch the U.S. Senate in action – or "inaction" – you would have to agree with this view.

For more than 1,365 days, the Senate has failed to perform its most basic duty as required by law and yet senators are still getting paid.

In four years, the Senate has not passed a federal budget. All this time, Senator Harry Reid's Democrat-controlled upper chamber has simply punted rather than take on the tough work of crafting a responsible federal spending blueprint.

The fact that senators are able to draw a paycheck while not doing their fundamental work is bad enough, but their failure to produce a budget for the past four years further distances them from the reality of the deficit and debt crisis facing our country. Simultaneously, they have shown they are disinclined to work with the House to address this growing threat.

Meanwhile, the Republican-led U.S. House has passed budgets on time each of the two years we have been in the majority. The last budget we passed (which was ignored by the Senate) effectively cut federal spending by \$4 trillion over ten years. But we cannot do the job alone.

Last week, in a strong bipartisan vote, the House passed the "No Budget, No Pay Act." This legislation takes the Senate to task for failing to produce an annual budget. It mandates that each chamber has three months to pass a federal budget blueprint. The chamber that fails to do so will not be paid.

It seems our legislation has already gotten the attention of the Senate. According to news reports, Senate Budget Committee chairwoman Patty Murray, D-Washington, has pledged to do her job and pass a budget this year. The eyes of the nation are finally focused on the Senate's work ethic. If they want to get paid, they'd better get busy.

My staff and I work for you. If I can ever be of service, please do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.

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